

U.S. Forces Tourney packs a punch in Stuttgart *Europe's top boxers contest for championship crowns*

STUTTGART-Germany - An hour before his welterweight championship bout, Cedric Benson skipped rope on the track just outside the Patch Barracks Fitness Center.

"I'm a little nervous," he said. "It's exciting though. It's just you and the other man out there."

A Soldier with C Co. 123rd, Benson was one of several boxers making their ring debut in this year's U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Championship in Stuttgart.

Boxers arrived for weigh-ins April 26. Qualifying bouts took place Thursday and Friday in a round-robin format. Boxers had a rest day on Saturday to prepare for the eight championship bouts scheduled on Sunday. Bouts were contested over three two-minute rounds. Giessen's Jacob Hasbrouck entered the finals of the lightweight category with a 2-0 record. An avid martial arts enthusiast, Hasbrouck said he joined his unit's boxing team to improve his hand speed and soon became "hooked" on the sport.

In this case, hooked is an understatement. For the last five months, Hasbrouck has trained twice a day, seven days a week beginning with a 5 a.m. five-mile jog. At the end of his duty day, he works on the speed bag, spars in the ring, lifts weights and climbs stairs. "He's eager to learn," said Sgt. First Class Mark Preston of HHC 1/36th, his coach. "He can go far. It's hard to find that kind of dedication."

His extra conditioning paid off on Sunday. He caught Jessie Palamino of Grafenwoehr square on the face in the first round, opening up a nasty nose bleed. The bell saved Palamino, but not for long. The referee stopped the contest 45 seconds into round two, despite a bloody Palamino, who pleaded, "Come on, man. I'm still having fun."



Staff Sgt. Edward Garcia of 1/10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) squares off against Grafenwoehr's Carlos Lebron April 29 in a light heavyweight match. Garcia was one of five Stuttgart-area boxers who won titles during the U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Championship held in the Patch Barracks Fitness Center.

Hasbrouck won the bout and was voted the tournament's most outstanding male boxer.

As with most of the boxers on Sunday, Hasbrouck's story was not uncommon.

Edward Garcia said there isn't a moment that boxing isn't on his mind. He spends most of his free time at the Panzer Kaserne Fitness Center, where, since September of last year, he trains with several other boxers from the 1/10th Special Forces Group (Airborne).

"It's a nerve racking experience to step in that ring," said Garcia, one of four Stuttgart boxers who won championship bouts on Sunday. "But I love the chance to knock someone out in front of a lot of people."



Pfc. Britney Teasley of 52nd Signal was voted most outstanding women's boxer during the U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Championship held April 29 on Patch.

In his light heavyweight matchup, Garcia locked horns with Grafenwoehr's Carlos Lebron in a bout that went the distance. The two boxers dodged jabs and exchanged body shots for three rounds, before the judges awarded Garcia a 4-1 decision and the crown.

"I was timing him pretty good," said Garcia afterwards. "But I also missed a lot. I got just enough to win and that's what counts."

Stuttgart's Christian Meyers landed just the right punch to win his championship bout against Heidelberg's Anthony Watson. The two heavyweights threw a barrage of punches at each other midway through round two. An exhausted Watson dropped his head and backed up against the ropes when Meyers stepped in for the finish.

"I think it was a right that wobbled him," said Meyers, who at 34 was the oldest competitor of the tournament. "He was going down, so I just threw a couple more punches and hoped for the best."

In the welterweight championship, Benson kept his nerves in check but lost to Kaiserslautern's Roberto Figueroa in three rounds with a 5-0 decision.

On the women's side, Britney Teasley of Stuttgart had just enough pace to outlast Rosalee Gordon of Kaiserslautern in three rounds to win the middleweight title. She was voted the tournament's MVP. With 31 points, Stuttgart boxers took home top team honors edging out squads from Grafenwoehr (22) and Wiesbaden (19). Boxers from six different U.S. Army garrisons competed.

"Unfortunately, we couldn't match up all the weight classes," said Steve Sanders, assistant sports director of USAG Stuttgart. "We still had a great championship with these eight bouts."

Amanda Krogh of Wiesbaden, Rex Apaghy of Giessen, Daemont Johnson of Kaiserslautern and Botiv Slavov of Stuttgart went uncontested in their respective weight classes.

"It takes a lot of courage to step in that ring," said Ernest Epps. "I've been a huge boxing fan all my life, and I think the fighters put on a great show."

The U.S. Forces Europe boxing schedule resumes June 23 with the Battle of the Titans in Stuttgart.

For details on this one-day tournament call the Patch Fitness Center at 430-7136/civ. 0711-680-7136.



Staff. Sgt. Ivan Kovalev of the Panzer-based 1/10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) gets some advice in between rounds from his ring coach Ron Lampert. Kovalev went on to win the match April 29.

Results of the U.S. Forces Europe Boxing Tournament held in Stuttgart, Germany:

Team Scoring:

Stuttgart 31, Grafenwoehr 22, Wiesbaden 19, Kaiserslautern 17, Giessen 16, Heidelberg 4.

Women:

Middleweight: Britney Teasley (USAG Stuttgart) def. Rosalee Gordon (USAG Kaiserslautern) 5-0.

Middleweight: Temali Mercado (USAG Grafenwoehr) def. Tabitha Cornejo (USAG Wiesbaden) 4-1.

Most outstanding boxer: Britney Teasley (USAG Stuttgart).

Men:

Lightweight: Jacob Hasbrouck (USAG Giessen) def. Jessie Palomino (USAG Grafenwoehr) by RSC (referee stopped contest), 45 seconds, 2nd two.

Welterweight: Roberto Figueroa (USAG Kaiserslautern) def. Cedric Benson (USAG Wiesbaden) 5-0.

Light Middleweight: Shawn Sullivan (USAG Kaiserslautern) def. Ricardo Medino (USAG Grafenwoehr) by RSC, 1:36, 2nd round.

Light Heavyweight: Edward Garcia (USAG Stuttgart) def. Carlos Lebron (USAG Grafenwoehr) 4-1.

Heavyweight: Christian Meyers (USAG Stuttgart) def. Anthony Watson (USAG Heidelberg) by RSC, 1:22, 2nd round.

Super Heavyweight: Ivan Kovaiev (USAG Stuttgart) def. Thomas Cowell (USAG Wiesbaden) 3-2.

Most outstanding boxer: Jacob Hasbrouck (USAG Giessen)

Story & photos by Brandon Beach
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Shawn Sullivan of USAG Kaiserslautern waits his corner during the second round of his light middleweight match as the referee gives his opponent, Ricardo Medina of USAG Grafenwoehr, his third and final standing eight count. Sullivan won the championship bout